
HELPFUL TIP - HOUSE RULES

PARENT QUESTION:

My son may be returning home after a 3 week residential stay. I need to establish some house rules. Do you have any recommendations for house rules/contract or samples that would be helpful?

The following response comes from PAN members, representing treatment providers parents, and criminal justice perspectives.

- Each family and situation is unique, so the plan needs to be personalized. That way the rules, consequences and benefits will best match the family.
- Get this sorted out before the child leaves the treatment facility, in discussion with the counselor at the treatment facility, the child's primary counselor or family therapist or aftercare provider (if different than the counselor at the treatment facility), child and parents/family members. A therapist/counselor can assist as a compassionate mediator as well as the medical expert.
- It is better to develop a personalized plan together rather than the parent creating it and having to be the "enforcer. If the parents are separated, or the child will be living at two residences, work to ensure the same standards are agreed to and upheld in each home.
- Ensure the ground rules and expectations are clear and understood by all. Privacy issues may need to be fully explained, for example, if the parent wants full access to the child's room, belongings, etc. Topics for consideration might include: signing a release of information with the therapist/counselor or probation and parole officer; treatment expectations; meeting/support group attendance; finances; education; employment; technology use; relapse; chores; curfew; friends.
- It is helpful to think about possible sticking points or issues that might arise before they occur in a time of crisis. Engage everyone in the exploration of possible issues and potential resolutions.
- "House rules" and expectations go both ways. What expectations do parents have of themselves? What expectations does the child have of the parents? For example, substances of abuse will not be kept or used in the home, including alcohol by any family members or guests. Parents will seek their own care/support group help.